

## CAMPS OFFER TIME OFF FOR TEEN CAREGIVERS

At Time for Us in Elkhorn, Wis., 10-year-old to 18-year-old campers are enjoying all the beloved activities of sleep-away camp during the majority of the day. But sandwiching these fun-oriented goings-on, for an hour in the morning and in the evening, a very different event takes place: educational sessions on cognitive impairment.

Time for Us and a few other groups across the country have created camps that provide a much-needed break for youth caregivers—giving them an opportunity to get away, have fun, learn about caregiving and gain support from others who can relate to their experiences.

Now in its fifth year, Time for Us accepts a dozen campers who have loved ones with Alzheimer's disease or a related illness for a one-week session each July. forMemory, of Dodgeville, Wis., a network of persons who began experiencing Alzheimer's disease or other cognitive changes prior to age 60, offers the get-away on the grounds of the Lutherdale Adventure Camp.

Here, members of forMemory serve as volunteer leaders, talking frankly with attendees about their own daily challenges in order to help the campers understand the disease and improve interactions with loved ones.

"At Time for Us, we educate the campers about what we ourselves go through as people with cognitive changes," said Mary Kay Baum, president of forMemory's board of directors.

Beyond learning communication and coping strategies, campers also are taught about healthy lifestyles that may help reduce their own risks of the disease in the future. There are sessions about good nutrition and protection against head injuries, for example.

Jesse Cotherman, 17, of Clintonville, Wis., has attended the camp twice and will be a junior leader this summer. "It's a great place to learn, meet people and make friends," he said. "Everyone there knows what you are going through."

Another program, Camp Treasure, in Lake Worth, Fla., was founded in 2007, by the American Association of Caregiving Youth, Boca Raton, Fla., for middle and high school students who double as caregivers of family members with a variety of illnesses and disabilities, including Alzheimer's disease.

The association offers three one-night sleep-over sessions in Florida—one in the spring and the fall for about 30 attendees each, and a reunion camp in the summer for past campers; and it will be bringing the camp to Arkansas, Maryland, New York, New Jersey and Ohio this fall through affiliate partnerships.

Programs range from caregiving education to typical camp activities like a ropes course, camp fires, swimming, music, art, and yoga.

Connie Siskowski, Ph.D, RN, director of the American Association of Caregiving Youth, said 700 youth have attended the camp to date.

"Camp Treasure not only provides respite," she said, "but it helps reaffirm to these young people that they are not alone."

—WRITTEN BY **AMANDA HIRSCHHORN**

### DETAILS

**TIME FOR US** – [www.formemory.org](http://www.formemory.org) – 608.935.5834  
**CAMP TREASURE** – [www.aacy.org](http://www.aacy.org) – 800.725.2512